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ABSTRACT

This booklet offers 101 tips on ways parents and other adults can become more involved in children's education. Suggestions are provided in 13 sections: (1) Learning Begins at Home; (2) Using the Newspaper for Better Learning; (3) Make Family Time = Learning Time; (4) Starting School Ready to Learn; (5) Building Self-Esteem; (6) Improving Academic Achievement; (7) Working with the School; (8) Promoting Your Family's Values; (9) Peer Pressure; (10) Preparing for the World of Work; (11) Good Health = Good Learning; (12) Sources of Help; and (13) Learning Is Everyone's Concern. (AC)

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101 WAYS PARENTS CAN HELP STUDENTS ACHIEVE

American Association of School Administrators

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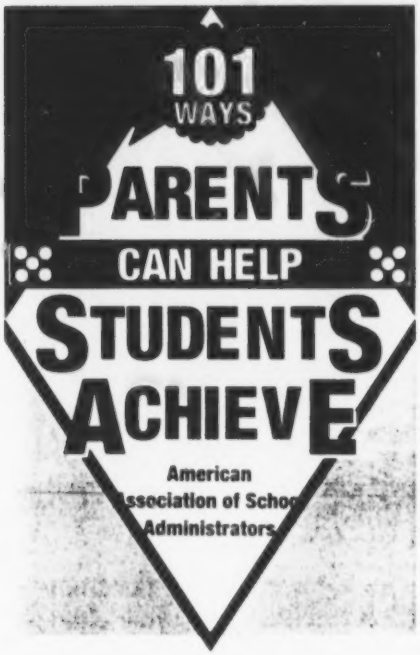


After more than 20 years of research, the link between parental involvement and student achievement is undeniable. For children to succeed, parents *must* take an active role. Researcher Anne C. Henderson found this to be true when she examined more than 50 studies of parent involvement and summarized the results in the 1987 book, *The Evidence Continues To Grow: Parental Involvement Improves Student Achievement*:

> Children whose parents help them at home and stay in touch with the school score higher than children of similar aptitude and family background whose parents are not involved. Schools where children are failing improve dramatically when parents are called in to help.

This publication offers 101 tips on ways parents and others can become more involved in children's education. None of them requires a teaching certificate. None are costly. But all do involve a commitment of time and attention.

But parents alone can't satisfy their children's every need. And, by themselves, schools can't make sure our students are prepared to be successful in the world of the future. Instead, it will require a partnership — parents, schools, business leaders, and the community working together to prepare our children for the future.

Learning Begins At Home

Between birth and age 18, children spend just 9 percent of their time in school. That's why your home environment is so important. Here are some ways you can help your children learn during the hours they are at home:

1

Establish routines for your child. Children thrive on orderliness. Keep a fairly regular schedule for meals, play, and work time. Set a regular bedtime. When a child is used to a routine at home, she* can adapt to classroom rules more easily.

2

Spend time every day talking with your child about her interests, hobbies, and friends. Children learn language at home—and spoken language gives children the foundation for better reading and writing. As children grow older, they need daily conversations as a way to develop values, test ideas, and share their thoughts.

3

Give your child responsibilities at home. These might include:

- Keeping the bedroom tidy.
- Sharing responsibility for a pet.
- Doing at least one thing daily for the good of the whole family—washing dishes, picking up the living room, or washing the car.

---

* *Because we believe in the importance of individuals, we often use the singular pronoun. To be fair, we alternate the use of "his" and "her" throughout this publication.*

4

Play games that reinforce language skills. Try question/answer games in which one player tries to learn facts by asking questions.

5

Make sure you have plenty of reading material in your home. Library visits can provide a constant supply of books. Newspapers and magazines can also catch a child's interest. If possible, consider giving your child a subscription to a children's magazine. Set a good example by reading instead of watching TV.

6

Consider holding family meetings. At these meetings, you can discuss plans and dreams. You can also involve children in solving family problems. Older children may want to assume the responsibility of chairing the family meeting.

7

Decorate your child's room with a large map of your state, the United States, or the world. These colorful, inexpensive maps can help *everyone* in the family learn more about geography.

8

Set limits on how much television your child can watch. At a minimum, turn off the television during study time. Consider making a rule that there will be no television until all schoolwork is finished. One concerned parent says there is a family rule that no one, not even her and her husband, watches TV during study hours. So far, she says, it has been worth the sacrifice. "Children cannot concentrate on two things at one time," she said. "If they only have one thing to think about they certainly get it done a lot faster."

Using the Newspaper for Better Learning (or, What's Black and White and Read All Over?)

Your daily newspaper provides a source of inexpensive learning activities. As well, getting children into the habit of reading the newspaper will benefit them throughout life. Here are some ways to use the newspaper to help your child achieve.

9

Display your child's schoolwork. Many families use the refrigerator door for this purpose. Others install a bulletin board on a child's bedroom door. Let your child know that you are proud of what he accomplishes in school.

10

Talk about school every day. Ask specific questions—what was the funniest thing that happened today? What was the hardest thing you did today?

11

Choose a "person of the week." Cut out a photo of this newsmaker and place it in a prominent place. During the week, encourage her to read as much as she can about the famous person. Try to include a range of male and female celebrities, athletes, and world leaders of all nationalities and races.

12

Use the weather map to learn geography. Check out the temperature in the cities where relatives or friends live.

13

Use newspaper information to make charts and graphs. A sports fan can track batting averages. A future financial analyst can chart fluctuations in the stock market.

14

Discuss an editorial on a controversial issue with your child. Discuss whether you agree or disagree with the point of view expressed. Then, *listen* to your child's point of view. Encourage him to write a letter to the editor in response to what you read. This is a good way to share and explore values.

15

Understanding *sequence* is an important reading skill. Cut comic strips into individual panels. Have young children place them in the correct order. Or, for older children, follow a story for a week and discuss how and why events unfolded.

16

Look through the newspaper to learn about free activities in your community. You may find out about concerts, plays, story tellers, or dance performances. Plan to enjoy one of these activities with your family.

Make Family Time = Learning Time

In today's hectic world, families often spend more time apart than together. This is why it is important to devote some individual time to each child every day. In addition, spend time together as a family. Here are some activities that will bring your family closer together ... and set the stage for better learning in school.

17

Plan activities the whole family can enjoy. You might try a picnic in the park; a trip to the zoo; a visit to an art gallery; or an afternoon spent fishing. These family activities can broaden your children's interests—and add to their intellectual stimulation, imagination, and academic achievement.

18

Consider making a family time capsule. To celebrate the new year, a birthday, or another special occasion, consider putting together a collection of items that preserve your family memories.

You'll need to find a sturdy container that will hold your family souvenirs. Invite your children to decorate the container with their artwork, a collage of newspaper articles, or pictures cut from magazines.

Here are some things that you might include:

- Photos of family members and pets
- Favorite cartoons or comic strips
- A favorite T-shirt
- Clippings of current events
- Personal statistics (height, weight, age, school grade level)
- Autographs
- School pictures
- Copies of old report cards
- Favorite old toys that are no longer being used.

Once you have assembled your time capsule, "bury" it in the back of the closet. Then enjoy it in future years.

19

Read to or with your children daily. Studies show this is the single most important thing parents can do to help their children achieve. Encourage older children to read to their younger siblings. This way, both are developing a habit of reading while they are forming a special bond with each other.

20

Make reading special. On a winter evening, pop some popcorn and snuggle up together with a book. Or, during the summer, plan a reading picnic under the stars. Give your child a book by a favorite author for a birthday or holiday gift.

21

Have your child use her imagination to plan a trip around the world. Have her think of places she would like to visit. Now try to help her find out as much as she can about those places. Visit the library to check out books about her imaginary destination. Teach her how to look in the card catalog or use the library computer to find books about the imaginary destination. Ask the

librarian if there are fiction books by authors from this country.

Teach your child how to write for information about other places. For example, most states have a department of tourism in the state capital she can write to. Most countries have an embassy that can provide you with additional information. Your local video store may also have a video about the country you've chosen.

22

Don't think you need to have all the answers. Kids ask "zillions" of questions. That's how they learn. Say, "I don't know—let's go look it up." (That way, you'll both learn something.)

23

Check out your local library. Make sure you and your child have library cards. Include a trip to the library in your weekly schedule.

24

Take a walk through your neighborhood at least once a week. Talk about what you see ... or about anything that's on your child's mind. These walks will become especially important as he grows older. Establishing the habit of communication when your child is young can build bridges that will promote talking and listening when he reaches the teen years.

25

Learn a new sport or activity with your child. Show your child that learning is a lifelong activity. As your child grows older, let him choose the activity you will learn together.

The family is critical to success in school. Indeed, the "curriculum of the home" is twice as predictive of academic learning as family socioeconomic status . . . . [and] parental influence is no less important in the high school years.

— *What Works: Research About Teaching and Learning*
U.S. Department of Education (1986)

Starting School Ready to Learn

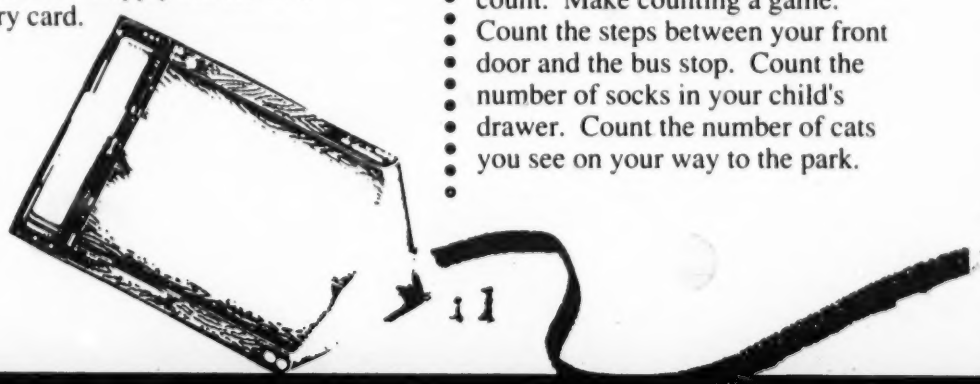
A child's experiences during the first five years of life set the stage for all later school achievement. School readiness is so important that the president and the nation's governors made it the first of the 1989 national education goals. Parents play the most critical role in ensuring that their children come to school ready to learn. Here are a few ways to start your child off on the right track:

26

Talk with your child. Spoken language provides the foundation for learning to read and write. Even if you have a baby that seems too young to understand what you are saying, talk anyway. Families who talk with their babies have children who develop language abilities earlier.

27

As soon as your child can write his name, let him apply for his own library card.



28

Help your child learn letters and numbers. Using crayons, make colorful posters of the "Letter of the Week" or the "Number of the Month."

29

Help your child learn to recognize shapes. Show her that her door is a rectangle, and that an orange is round. Besides teaching shapes, you'll also be making your child a better observer of the world around her.

30

Read aloud to your child regularly and often. *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, by Jim Trelease (available at any library or bookstore) provides excellent suggestions. Set a goal of reading to your child for 60 minutes a week—but not necessarily all at one sitting.

31

Count with your child. Kids love to count. Make counting a game. Count the steps between your front door and the bus stop. Count the number of socks in your child's drawer. Count the number of cats you see on your way to the park.

32

Give your child plenty of chances to learn by doing. Let her try new things. Give her simple directions to follow.

33

Practice makes perfect for a young child. Whether your child is learning to walk or to tie her shoe, give her lots of time to repeat. And encourage her efforts.

34

Sing favorite songs with your child. Children love the rhythm and the rhyme of music. Whether you sing children's songs or your favorite music, you'll be introducing your child to a love of language and music.

35

Teach your child patience. Let him know that sometimes he has to wait for something. It is not always possible—or advisable—for parents to give children what they want. Teach your child that rewards often come after hard work and effort.

Building Self-Esteem

Kids who have high self-esteem are willing to take chances in school. They're able to stay with a difficult subject until they master it. Here are some ways you can boost your child's self-esteem.

36

Know your child's strengths and weaknesses. All children are unique. Even in the same family, one child may love math and find it easy, while another finds it a challenge. Some may have trouble concentrating on reading while

another constantly has his nose in a book. Challenge kids in their areas of strength and provide support in areas of weakness. One way to better understand your child's strengths and weaknesses is to talk regularly with his teacher or teachers.

37

Praise your child's efforts as well as his accomplishments. When he sets the table, say, "I appreciate the fact that you met your responsibility without being asked. You're a hard worker." If your child is doing his homework, say, "You are working hard. I know your work will pay off." Studies show that students and adults who make persistent effort are most likely to succeed.

38

Help your child be proud of your family's ethnic heritage. Learn as much as you can about the culture of your ancestors. Read books to learn more about your family's roots. Find out about famous people who share your ethnic background. Talk with older relatives to gather family memories.

39

Ask your children, "What do you think?" Then really listen to the answers.

40

Teach your child to celebrate diversity. Learn more about other cultures. Watch television programs or read books about other countries. Enjoy ethnic foods.

41

Find times for one-on-one conversations with your children. Each week, try to set aside some special time. Schedule it on your calendar so your son or daughter can look forward to it. During this time, do something your child likes—play a game, watch a movie, or go for a walk.

42

Teach your child how to set goals. First, help your child choose one goal that is both challenging and attainable. Examples might be, "I will complete my history reading every night," or "I will receive a grade of 90 on my spelling test."

Next, write the goal. Post it where your child can see it. A visual reminder will help keep your child motivated.

Now talk about strategies for accomplishing the goal. These should be concrete steps that help your child move purposefully toward the goal. For example, a

child trying to improve a spelling grade might:

- set aside 15 minutes of study time every day
- make flash cards of the difficult words
- ask family members to give practice tests.

Check progress. If your child completes each step, be sure to celebrate her effort. If she encounters problems, help her get back on track.

Finally, evaluate your child's progress. Did she reach her goal? Why or why not? What did she learn from her success? If she didn't reach her goal, what did she learn from the experience? Praise your child's effort in trying to reach the goal, and teach her that even though she didn't succeed as she'd hoped, she's still made positive progress.

Then help her set *another* achievable goal. Every time your child reaches a goal, she's building her self-esteem so she can try to reach another one.

43

Find ways to help your child feel important. One study by the National Family Institute found that the average parent spends 14.5 minutes a day communicating with each child. Of that time, 12.5 minutes are devoted to parental criticism or correction. Not surprisingly, those behaviors lead many children to believe they do not matter to anyone, or that they can't do anything right. Make a special effort to tell your child every day that he is special.

44

Pick your child up when she's down. Remind her that striking out in the baseball game doesn't mean she's a failure at home. Let her know that a poor grade on a spelling test doesn't mean she isn't smart.

45

Be aware of your expectations. Parents who assume boys are "naturally" better at math or sports— and girls better at reading— may be limiting their child's future accomplishments. A recent study by a University of Colorado psychologist found, for example, that parents' beliefs may lead girls to drop out of math courses. That, in turn, can prevent them from entering many high-paying careers. "Girls don't get worse grades than boys at any level of math," the author of the study said. "But they drop out of it much sooner, and here's where parents' expectations are having an effect.

46

Encourage your child to take part in extracurricular activities. After-school drama, athletics, music, service, language and other clubs give kids a chance to try new skills and receive recognition for a job well done.

A Plus

Improving Academic Achievement

By showing your interest in your child's learning, and by holding high expectations for your child, you can develop attitudes that lead to school success. Here are some ways you can improve academic achievement.

47

Make homework a priority. Provide a quiet, well lit place for your child to study. Make sure you have some basic "tools of the trade" — a dictionary, a ruler, pens and pencils.

48

Establish a regular study time. Expect your child to spend some time on schoolwork every day. On days when there are no assignments, your child can read a book for the allotted time. During study time, the television should be *off* and telephone calls should be returned later.

49

If your child has difficulty with one subject, have him begin a homework session by completing that assignment first while he's fresh. He can save his favorite subjects for last.

50

Do your own "homework" while your kids are studying, if possible. Pay bills, write letters, or balance your checkbook.
When your kids see that study time applies to everyone, they'll be more likely to take it seriously.

51

When your child begins to study history, help him create a timeline that will be displayed in his room. One year, have him fill in important dates in American history. The next year, he can add important dates in world history.

52

Today's news is history in the making. Watch the evening news together. Talk about current events at the dinner table. Choose one or two stories to follow closely. Read more about them in newspapers and magazines.

53

Consider using the Wisconsin State Reading Association's "rule of thumb" when choosing books for your child. Have your child read a page of a book aloud. Each time he encounters a word he doesn't know, have him hold up one finger. If he holds up four fingers and a thumb, or finds five or more troublesome words on a page, the book is probably too difficult.

54

Reward your child for doing well. However, keep in mind that always offering money or presents for special accomplishments will leave the impression that people should work only for rewards ... and not for the pride of doing a job well. Try rewarding outstanding performance with *time together*. Let your "star" choose an activity for the whole family to enjoy — a picnic, watching a favorite video, or a visit to the zoo.

55

Help your child do better on tests. Make sure to encourage your child to:

- Study for several days before the test. Kids need time to absorb information.
- Get plenty of sleep ... and a good breakfast.

Also encourage your child to:

- Listen carefully to directions. Teachers may deduct points if students don't follow instructions.
- Look over the test before answering any questions. Nothing is worse than discovering a 15-minute essay question when you have only 5 minutes remaining in the class.
- Not spend too much time on any one question. It's usually better to answer as many questions as possible. If there's time, your child can return to questions that have him stumped.

56

Turn your child into the teacher. You play the part of the student. As he teaches you, he'll be absorbing important information.

"We teach [illegible] by example. Exa[illegible] school of mankind, a[illegible] will learn at no other."

— Edm[illegible]

Working with the School

When home and school work together, students learn more. There are many ways parents can establish a partnership with their children's school. Even very busy parents can find ways to work more closely with the school. Here are some suggestions:

57

Get to know your child's teachers—no matter what age your child is. Take younger children to school on the first day. For any age child, send a brief note to the teacher saying you want to work together to improve your child's education.

58

Attend parent-teacher conferences. These meetings, usually held twice a year, give parents and teachers a great opportunity to share ideas and solve problems. Here are some questions you might want to ask:

- Does my child follow directions?
- Does my child attend class regularly? Complete assignments regularly?
- What aspects of school does he/she seem to enjoy most?
- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?
- Does my child need help in any academic area or need to be referred to school specialists?
- Does my child get along well with other children?

59

Join your school's parent-teacher association. And try to say "yes" when you're called to help. (Or ask if there's another job you can do.) Your involvement with your child's school will send a message that you think school is important. If every parent spends a *little* time working with the school, the results can be dramatic.

Joining the parent-teacher association is especially important as children grow older. By working with other parents, you can agree to work together to set rules regarding important issues, such as the need for parental supervision at parties.

60

Compile a list of parents with special skills or interests for your school. These talents can help teachers enrich learning activities for all students. Volunteer to discuss your own career with a group of students. Appear as a "guest reader" and read one of your own favorite books from childhood.

61

Stay informed. Attend school events and programs. Read the school newsletter. Attend a school board meeting as a member of the audience.

62

Consider spending a day at school with your child. Many working parents schedule a day of annual leave for this purpose. Or, if possible, join your child for lunch in the school cafeteria.

63

Volunteer. Many studies show that when parents take an active role as school volunteers, student achievement rises. That's particularly true for the children of school volunteers. Your actions really do speak louder than your words. In an elementary school, you might:

- Read to a child
- Help tutor a child
- Make a bulletin board
- Listen to a child read to you.

In an intermediate or high school, you might:

- Sponsor a chapter of Students Against Drunk Driving or other service organization
- Create a welcoming committee for newcomers to the community
- Work in the attendance office telephoning parents about students' absences
- Assist the school nurse.

64

Say "thank you." Jot a quick note to thank a teacher for spending extra time with your son or daughter. Call the principal to share the good news about a history teacher who has sparked your daughter's interest. At the end of the year, write a letter to a teacher who has done an outstanding job—and send a copy to the school district's personnel office.

65

Consider serving on a school or district advisory group. As a parent, you have valuable insights that can help improve education for all children.

66

Don't be afraid to advocate for your child. Perhaps you are concerned about a teacher who assigns too much homework—or not enough. Perhaps your child is persistently unhappy with a teacher. Perhaps you believe your child should be taking more challenging courses.

If your concern extends over time, let the school know. Begin by talking with the teacher. If you can't resolve things at that level, contact the principal. Other school administrators, including the superintendent, may also be helpful. When you act as an advocate for your child, remember that reason and facts will be more persuasive than anger and emotion.

Promoting Your Family's Values

Parents today are worried about the values their children are exposed to in society. The schools share this concern. But schools recognize that a person's primary values must continue to come from home. Here are some ways to pass on your family's values to your children:

67

Talk about your values. If you choose to visit a relative or spend time with your child, rather than work overtime, say, "I believe people are more important than things." If you give money to support a cause you believe in, tell your child why you're doing it.

68

Encourage your child to talk about his values, too. Whenever possible, try to support your child's values by taking positive action. For instance, many children are as concerned, if not more concerned, about protecting the environment than adults. If this is the case, you could work with your son or daughter to promote recycling in your family.

69

Think about the message you send with your actions. It's hard to talk about honesty if you brag about cheating on your taxes. It's hard to teach the value of human kindness and fairness if you condemn other races or peoples.

70

Teach your children *how* to make decisions. Ask your child to think about what might happen if she chooses one course of action over

another. But let her make some of her own decisions—and discover her own consequences.

71

Let your children know you are always there to listen. Teens sometimes say they don't talk with their parents because they don't want a lecture. If your son or daughter starts discussing a problem, make an effort to *listen* more than you talk.

Peer Pressure

As children grow older, they spend more time with friends. This is a necessary part of growing up as teens learn how to get along outside their family. But peer pressure can lead to unhealthy behavior, including early sexual activity, drugs, and alcohol. Here are some ways you can limit the negative influence of peer pressure on your children:

"What children bring to school ... is critically important in the learning process."

— Dorothy Rich
Home and School Institute

72

Get to know your child's friends. Invite kids to spend their after-school hours in your home. For the price of a few refreshments, you'll soon learn about who your child is seeing ... and you'll be able to make sure no drugs or alcohol are used.

73

Teach your child *how* to say no. You might role play a situation in which your teenager is offered drugs or alcohol. Here are some responses:

- "No, thank you."
- "I don't need that to have a good time."
- "I have to stay sharp for my team."
- "No means no."

74

Talk with other parents. You might learn that "everybody" *isn't* allowing kids to have unsupervised parties. In one Wisconsin school district, parents have organized themselves into a Parent Support Network. Beginning in middle school, the parents agree:

- not to allow parties in their homes when they are not present.

- not to permit the use of drugs in their homes or on their property.
- to follow certain guidelines if a party is held at their home, including calling the parents of children who possess drugs or alcohol.
- to call the host parent to verify the occasion and location.
- to allow their children to attend parties only at the homes of parents who have signed the agreement.
- to call host parents who have not signed the commitment to discuss the guidelines about social gatherings.
- to tell their children they have signed the agreement, and to discuss it with them.

75

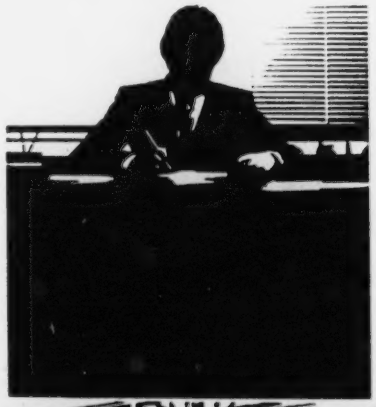
Turn peer pressure into positive pressure. Encourage your child to work with other teens to tackle a problem in your community. He might volunteer at a soup kitchen, develop a performance for senior citizens, or clean up a stretch of highway. He'll be improving the community *and* boosting his self-esteem.

76

Many schools sponsor peer counseling programs. Students who are accepted into these programs learn listening and leadership skills. They often have a chance to work with younger students to provide a positive role model. Find out whether your school has such a program and encourage your child to participate.

Preparing for the World of Work

All parents want their kids to find work that will give them a satisfying and secure life. There are some important things parents can do during the school-age years that can lead to a brighter future.



77

Ask your child to describe her life as an adult. Then have her research what she needs to do now to prepare for that career. A student who wants to become a doctor, for example, needs to take challenging science courses in high school.

78

Help your teenager understand that even if he doesn't have a specific career goal, the decisions he makes now can affect his future. Insist that your child take challenging courses, including the higher-level math courses that can make the difference in whether or not your child will be able to attend college.

79

After-school jobs can teach a teenager responsibility. In some families, these jobs are a necessary part of the family security. But make sure your child isn't placing too much emphasis on work and not enough on school. Most experts feel that teenagers should work no more than 15 or 20 hours a week, and never after 10 p.m. on a school night.

80

If your child has a job, suggest that some of the money he earns be saved for college or other training, a large purchase such as a car, or a trip to see a friend. Teach him how to balance a checking or savings account.

81

Not every young person needs to go to college. But to be successful, every American worker needs some advanced training. If your child is not interested in attending college, find out about vocational schools or other training courses that offer preparation for a rewarding career.

Good Health = Good Learning

The Greeks knew the importance of a sound mind and a sound body. Today, teachers know that poor health or mutrition can cause poor performance in school.

82

Exercise together. Studies show that American kids are more overweight than any earlier generation. In fact, doctors are now seeing children with adult health problems, like high cholesterol. One of the main reasons children are so overweight, doctors say, is because they don't get enough exercise. Set aside a regular time for your family to enjoy some outdoor activity together. A brisk walk will improve your fitness ... and give you time to talk with your kids.

83

Teach your children to prepare healthy snacks. Even young children can learn to prepare a peanut butter sandwich. Older kids can pop some popcorn. Fruit can satisfy a sweet tooth. If you avoid buying snacks that are full of sugar and fat, your children will soon learn to prefer more nutritious choices.

84

Encourage your child to take part in an after-school sport. Not only will your child get more exercise, but sports also teach team playing and encourage friendships. Kids often translate success on the playing field into success in school. Encourage your child to choose a sport (instead of you choosing one).

85

Learn some of the warning signs that your son or daughter may be involved with drugs:

- Declining school attendance or performance.
- Worsened relationships with family and friends.
- Ignoring curfews.
- Increased borrowing money from family or friends.
- Possessing alcohol or drug paraphernalia.

- Stealing.
- Associating with a new group of friends, especially those who you suspect use drugs.
- Skipping school more often for reported sickness or other reasons.

86

Help your school develop policies about alcohol and other drug use or abuse.

Sources of Help

Parenting is a tough job. Odds are, you'll need some help at some time while your child is growing up. Here are some places where you can get help.

87

Talk with your school counselor. He or she can often provide important insight into how well your child is doing in school. A counselor can also help you work with teachers to address school problems.

88

Turn to your minister, rabbi, or other religious adviser as a source of support and help. Many religious organizations sponsor free or low-cost counseling. In some communities, church-sponsored athletic leagues provide wholesome after-school entertainment for children.

89

Visit your school or public libraries for books on parenting. If you need more information on how to deal with a particular age, or on solving a particular problem, you may find the information you need in a book.

90

Consider joining a parent group. Community mental health agencies many sponsor groups where parents meet to share their concerns and support each other. These groups can be a valuable way of learning new strategies for dealing with your son or daughter. Seek family counseling when problems seem severe. Be open to suggestions about yourself. All problems are not your child's fault.

91

Check to see which agencies in your community sponsor programs for children and teenagers. They may be aware of resources in the community to help families, as well.

Learning is Everyone's Concern

Every citizen has a stake in preparing our nation's next generation. Here are some ways that communities can play a more active role in helping students achieve:

92

Establish a community task force to ensure that all children have access to high quality, developmentally appropriate educational experiences during their preschool years. These might include home visit programs to train parents, employer supported day care, or high quality preschool programs.

93

Establish school-business partnerships. Both partners can work together to share ideas, work toward common goals, and support efforts to help students learn. Employers might consider granting parents leave to attend conferences or volunteer in school, for example. Schools, in turn, can work with the business community to prepare graduates with the skills they will need to enter the workforce.

94

Launch a community effort to ensure that all children have adequate health care. Find out what health care services are available. Children whose teeth hurt, or who need glasses, cannot concentrate in school. Ask for local support to fill in the gaps, where they exist.

95

Work with community agencies including the recreation department to serve the needs of "latchkey" children —those left alone after school.

96

Develop a list of community resources that are available to help families. Disadvantaged students may need services from many community agencies. A resource directory can make families aware of where to get the help they need. Distribute the list widely to school and other agency staff members.

97

Consider cooperative activities to better meet the needs of children and their families. When several agencies cooperate, they can reduce wasteful duplication ... and improve services. For example, the county health department could schedule regular visits to the school health clinic. Social services workers could meet with school counselors.

98

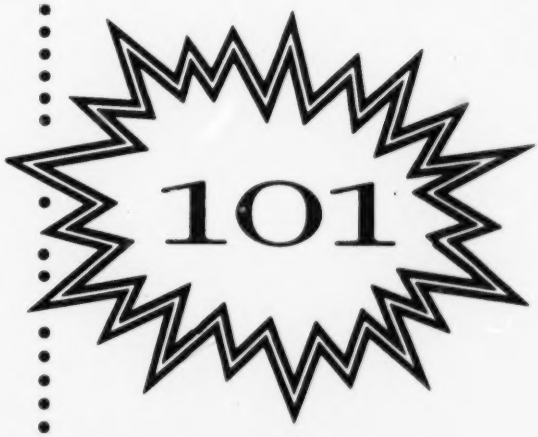
Remember that retired citizens have much to contribute to the schools. They can visit classrooms to provide an extra pair of eyes and hands for a busy teacher. They can take the time to listen to a troubled student. Those confined to their homes may be able to help teachers prepare special learning activities or materials for bulletin boards.

99

If you need help to improve your own skills, reach out to the business community, which has an interest in ensuring that all workers can read. Worksite literacy programs are an effective way to meet parents' needs. Studies show that as parents' reading improves, their children's school performance also rises.

100

Check out public libraries, which are strong educational partners. They can sponsor story hours for preschoolers and their parents, special programs that motivate children to read, or specialized evening classes on topics of interest to parents.



Ask churches and civic organizations to provide valuable services for schools. Many are excellent sources of volunteers.

CONCLUSION

Today, Americans hold higher expectations than ever for the students in schools. The 1991 Gallup Poll on American Education, for example, found that 89 percent of respondents believe that developing the best education system in the world will be very important in determining America's strength in the future. In addition, nearly four of five respondents placed either high or very high priority on each of the six National Education Goals developed in 1989. Clearly, we want our children to have the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century.

With a little caring and creativity, parents can help children get ready for school, enjoy school, and stay in school. It is important to keep in mind, however, that while parents are the most important influence on a child's life, students learn better when schools, families, and communities work together. Only with a concerted effort will students become life-long learners, and ultimately, happier, better citizens of this complex world.

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